

# **Reinvigorating National Attention and Action on RADON**

## **Radon is the Second Leading Cause of Lung Cancer in our Nation.**

- 20,000 people die every year in the United States, according to the National Academy of Sciences and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, due to lung cancer from exposure to radon in their homes. Radon is also the leading cause of lung cancer for non-smokers. The science on radon is among the strongest for any environmental contaminant.

## **All Homes Need to be Tested for Radon and High Levels Need to be Fixed.**

- EPA, the Surgeon General, and many other health organizations recommend that all homes be tested for radon and that high levels be fixed.
- Radon action is among the most cost-effective environmental programs in the nation.

## **We Must Achieve Substantial Increases in National Radon Risk Reduction.**

- Some of the public has responded. About 20% of the nation's 100 million homes have been tested for radon. In 2003, about 515,000 of the more than 6 million homes estimated to have high radon levels had been fixed. Each year, about 10% of our nation's new homes are built with radon-resistant features.
- But, not enough radon action is taking place given the high risk and the low cost of mitigation.
- We must reinvigorate national attention and action with new energy and approaches. We will foster new and substantial action in the health, environmental, housing, and community-planning sectors.

## **EPA has Established Four Policy Anchors to double mitigation and new construction rates by 2012**

### **1. National Partnership Agenda - build new partnerships and increase national outreach efforts**

#### New activities in place to accomplish this agenda include:

- a. New grants for radon-specific activities will be awarded in Aug 05.
- b. The first newly designed public service advertising in 3 years will be released in the Fall of 2005.
- c. We have begun a new series of partnerships with key housing, environmental, and public health organizations.
- d. We secured a new Surgeon General National Health Advisory on radon in Jan 05.

#### Additional Investments planned or needed include:

- a. Form new partnerships that focus on building stronger state programs and policies to address low-income populations.

- b. Develop new strategies to increase radon action during real estate transactions, especially among first time homebuyers by partnering with housing organizations.

**2. State partnership agenda - increase the number of states, tribes, and localities with active and comprehensive radon programs.**

New activities in place to accomplish this agenda include:

- a. The Clean Air Act Advisory Committee adopted a series of recommendations to EPA on increasing national action on radon at the April 8<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- b. We are working with STAPPA/ALAPCO through their Public Outreach Committee to promote and support increases in state-level radon risk reduction.
- c. We are continuing to support low-income and tribal communities through the environmental justice-radon testing program at our Las Vegas laboratory.
- d. EPA's new CARE program begins this Summer to assist communities across the country who want to reduce air toxic pollutants – EPA will feature radon as a high priority, high risk pollutant in this program.

Additional Investments planned or needed include:

- a. Enrolling more states into an EPA-defined model program

Example "Critical Elements"

- Certification requirements
- Consumer Education
- Environment/Health/Radiation coordination
- Statewide/multiple local radon-resistant codes
- Low-income mitigation pool
- School testing and mitigation program
- Active local radon coalitions
- Disclosure policies in real estate transactions
- System addressing high homes that have tested but not fixed
- Results reporting
- Multi-lingual materials

**Building Federal Partnerships:**

- New Surgeon General Health Advisory on radon in January
- New recent HUD radon housing policies
- New Office of the Federal Environmental Executive radon public information campaign
- Radon-resistant housing construction by the Depts. of the Army and Navy

- b. Publish and market an EPA Model minimum-level state certification program
- c. Publish and market an EPA Model state radon program
- d. Work with HHS/CDC to raise the profile of radon for state health departments, and other state decision makers

### **3. Market-driven agenda - accelerate action in the marketplace to reduce radon as a normal part of doing business.**

#### New activities in place to accomplish this agenda include:

- a. A new Energy Star Air+ labeling pilot for homes built with good indoor air features will begin this Spring – to get a label, the builder must address radon for homes in high-risk radon areas.
- b. EPA is developing new green building best practices guidance that includes radon as a high priority component.

#### Additional Investments planned or needed include:

- a. Increase impact of work with HUD and other federal agencies to accelerate progress in the housing market, such as better leveraging use of federal housing grants to address radon (e.g. HUD 203K, USDA 504).
- b. Build more action into the real estate transaction. We will hold a real estate summit in the next year to bring the best minds together to launch a dialogue about developing a new real estate approach.
- c. Support the radon market through private sector and states
  - 1. Increase prominence of message to consumers that they need to use certified mitigation programs in their state
  - 2. Promote adoption of state certification, licensing, or other industry listing programs
  - 3. QA/QC technical support/consumer protection support to state certification and private qualification programs
- d. Public/private partnership for green fan technology

### **4. Science and technology agenda - expand scientific knowledge and technologies at the domestic and international level to support and drive more aggressive action on radon.**

#### New assets that are in place to accomplish this agenda include:

- a. EPA is funding a new collaborative project with the World Health Organization and other nations launched this year to establish a Radon Global Burden of Disease report that includes an action-based set of policies.
- b. EPA is highlighting new risk assessments and other emerging studies.
- c. EPA is funding a new research study to validate and demonstrate additional benefits from home radon mitigation systems, such as moisture and mold reduction.
- d. We are fostering the development and entry of new radon technologies into the marketplace by opening a device evaluation program at our Las Vegas laboratory.

#### **Confronting Health Disparities**

Challenge: Provide increased means for low-income populations to fix high-radon homes?

- Funded new partnerships to increase radon action in low-income populations.
- Las Vegas lab support to EJ testing and mitigation programs.

#### Additional Investments planned or needed include

- a) Investigate further the average fan life of active radon mitigation systems, and how this is affected by climate and geography.

- b) Further investigate the effectiveness of RRNC techniques, which includes assessing the effect of builder installation techniques and quality control, and the effects of seasonal weather variations, and the effectiveness of RRNC over time.
- c) Investigate why some homeowners who test high for radon choose to mitigate and other do not.